

2071.0 - Reflecting a Nation: Stories from the 2011 Census, 2012–2013

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The rate of attainment of Year 12 or an equivalent school or non-school qualification has risen in recent decades and has likely been influenced by a number of factors, one of which is the commitment from government to raising the minimum level of education of young people. Endnote 1

In this article 'Year 12 or equivalent school or non-school qualification' refers to:

- people who have been awarded a statement or certificate of completion of Year 12(a) by an Australian Government studies authority/Department; and/or
- attained a Qualification at AQF Certificate Level II or above. Endnote 2 and Endnote 3

(a) See NOTES box at end for further information regarding the interpretation of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications.

Data for this article are drawn from the 2011 Census of Population and Housing.

In 2009, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) signed a National Education Agreement. A key objective from the agreement was that 'all Australian school students acquire the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society and employment in a globalised economy'. Furthermore, an outcome of the agreement was 'that young people make a successful transition from school to work and further study'. Endnote 2

A key target of the agreement was to 'increase the national rate of Year 12 attainment or equivalent' to 90% by 2015. The target rates differ across the states and territories with, for example, the target rate for ACT being 95.0% and the Northern Territory 71.6%. Endnote 1

Changes to government allowances in recent years may also have had an effect on young people's willingness to complete Year 12 or equivalent as young people under the age of 25 without Year 12 attainment or equivalent must now be in education or training to receive government support payments. Endnote 4

This article looks at the rates of Year 12 attainment or equivalent school or non-school qualifications over the last decade - defined as those who reported their highest year of schooling as Year 12 or equivalent and/or Certificate II or above.

It will also briefly examine participation in further education of students aged 20–24 years and how

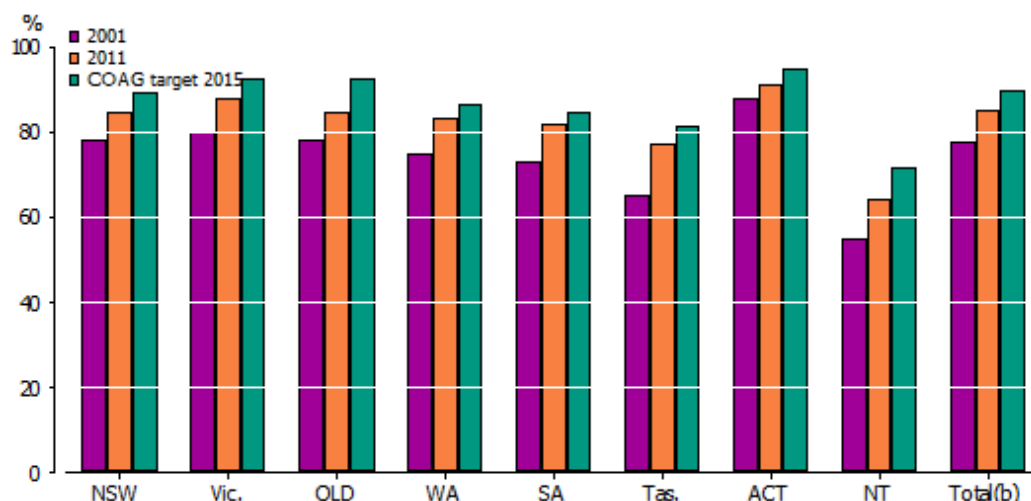
this has changed over time.

YEAR 12 ACHIEVEMENT RATES CONTINUE TO RISE

The national rate of attainment of Year 12 or equivalent school or non-school qualification for young people aged 20–24 years has risen over the last 3 censuses from 78% in 2001 to 85% in 2011. However, the proportions vary considerably across the states and territories with the ACT having the highest proportion (91%) and the Northern Territory the lowest (64%) in 2011.

While the ACT has continued to achieve the highest rates of attainment for Year 12 or equivalent school or non-school qualification, this has risen by only a small amount from 88% in 2001 to 91% in 2011. While still having one of the lowest attainment rates overall for 20–24 year olds, Tasmania has experienced the greatest increase, from 65% in 2001 to 77% in 2011. The Northern Territory had the lowest overall achievement rate in both 2001 and 2011, but experienced a large increase from 55% to 64%.

YEAR 12 AND EQUIVALENT ATTAINMENT(a) FOR 20-24 YEAR OLDS, including COAG targets for 2015



(a) Certificate II and above includes 'Certificate I & II level, not further defined'.

(b) Other Territories are included in total.

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AGE

Not surprisingly, in nearly all states the likelihood of having Year 12 or equivalent school or non-school qualification for 20–24 year olds, increased with age with most states and the ACT having only minor differences across the age range. The Northern Territory had the greatest range with 54% of 20 year olds having achieved a Year 12 or equivalent school or non-school qualification increasing to 70% for 24 year olds. Tasmania, too, had a large range increasing from 73% for 20 year olds to 81% for 24 year olds.

PARTICIPATION IN FURTHER EDUCATION

In addition to the increase in attainment of Year 12 or equivalent school or non-school qualification, over the last 40 years there has been an increase in the proportion of 20–24 year olds undertaking further study at university or TAFE. In 1971 there were almost 101,000 students aged 20–24 years attending further education, representing 9% of the total 20–24 year old population. By 2011, this number had increased to 485,000 students and represented 33% of the total 20–24 year old

population, higher than the 2001 proportion of 29%. In 2011, there were also 277,000 students aged 15–19 years studying at university or TAFE, however, this article focuses on students aged 20–24 years.

In 2011, the ACT had the highest proportion of 20–24 year olds attending university or TAFE and the Northern Territory the lowest, which is consistent with results from previous censuses; in 2011, the proportions were 48% for the ACT and 13% for the Northern Territory.

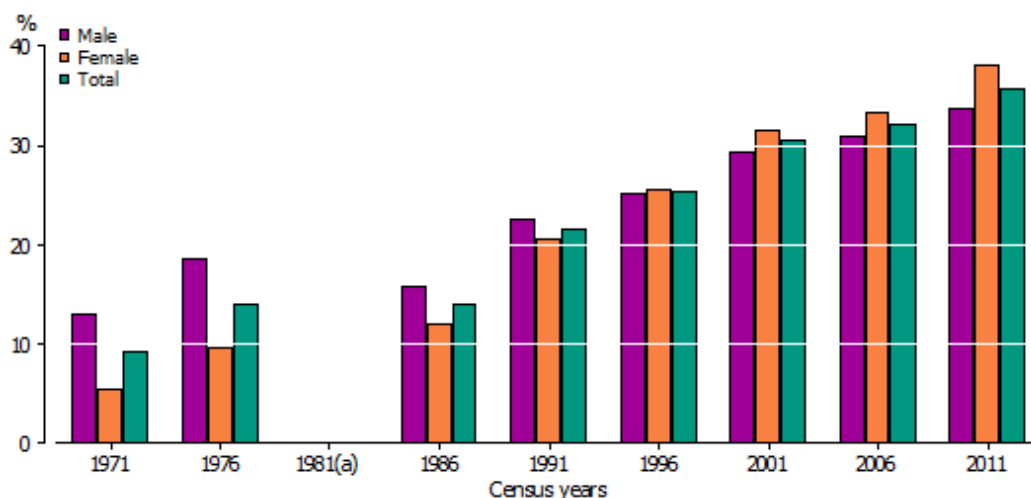
SEX

Over the last 40 years, the number of women aged 20-24 years in further education has increased markedly compared to the number of men in this age group. In 1971, 29% of students of this age in further education were women but over the next 25 years this proportion steadily increased and by 1996 the proportions were even at 50% each for women and men. From 2001 onwards, Census data has consistently shown more women than men aged 20–24 year olds participating in further education, with women accounting for 53% of students in 2011.

A similar trend can be seen at both university and TAFE. In 1971, 13% of 20-24 year olds at TAFE were women, but by 2011 the gap had narrowed considerably with women accounting for 44% of TAFE students. At university, also, women were in the minority in 1971, comprising one third of students aged 20-24 years (33 per cent), but by 2011 they accounted for more than half (55 per cent).

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PROPORTION OF THE TOTAL POPULATION OF 20–24 YEAR OLDS ATTENDING FURTHER EDUCATION, 1971–2011



(a) Data collected in 1981 did not separately identify the type of educational institution attended.

TRENDS IN UNIVERSITY AND TAFE ATTENDANCE

Of those undertaking further education, the majority of students attended university. The proportion of 20-24 year olds attending university increased in the decade to 2011 across all states and territories. In 2011 there were 377,000 students aged 20–24 years at university which represented 28% of the people in this age group. This is an increase from 2001 when 22% (258,000) of the 20–24 year old population attended university. Over the same period, however, the proportion of 20–24 year olds attending TAFE decreased from 9% to 8%.

FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME STUDENT STATUS ACROSS THE INSTITUTIONS

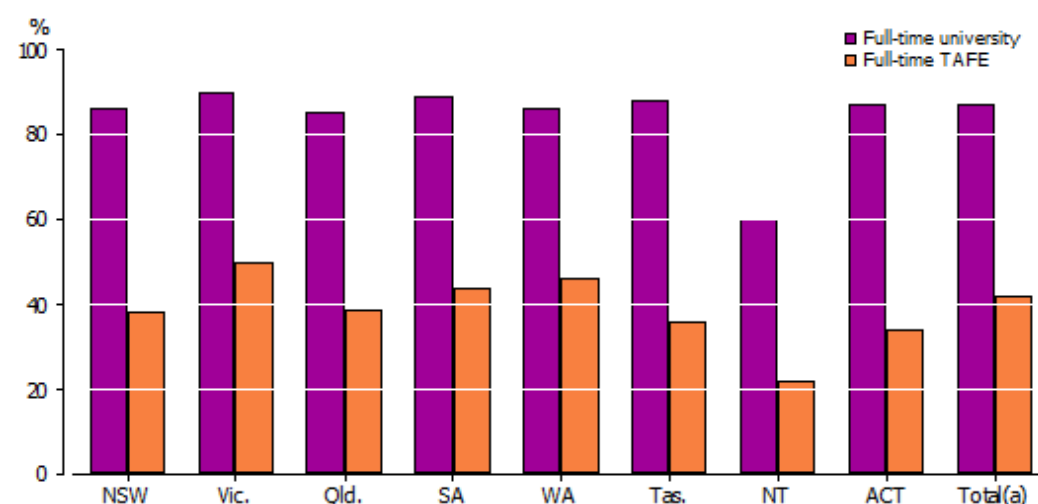
While 77% of 20–24 year old students undertaking further education in 2011 were studying full-time, the pattern is very different depending on the type of institution they attended.

A much higher proportion of university students aged 20–24 years were studying full-time (87%) than were TAFE students (42%). In both cases this represents an increase from 2001 when the proportions of students studying full-time were 84% (university) and 38% (TAFE).

Across Australia, full-time attendance rates for university students aged 20–24 years were generally quite high, with most states and territories having 85% or more studying full-time. The Northern Territory had the lowest proportion - 60% of university students attended full-time.

Full-time attendance rates for TAFE students aged 20–24 years were low compared to university. Victoria had the highest proportion of TAFE students who were full-time (50%) and the Northern Territory the lowest (22%). After the Northern Territory, the ACT also had a low full-time attendance rate - 34% of 20–24 year old TAFE students attended full-time.

PROPORTION OF 20–24 YEAR OLD UNIVERSITY OR TAFE STUDENTS, ATTENDING FULL-TIME



(a) Other Territories are included in total.

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NOTES

Year 12 and equivalent

For the purposes of this article, Year 12 or equivalent school or non-school qualification, refers to those who reported their highest year of school as Year 12 or equivalent and/or reported their highest non-school qualification as Certificate II or above. The term 'completion of Year 12 or equivalent' applies to a number of different qualifications. Equivalent Year 12 study might include relevant overseas qualifications and similar level of study in Australia, such as Form 6. Year 12 equivalent qualifications were detailed in the Census Guide (long version) available on-line at the time of the Census.

Also, current practice is to consider AQF Certificate Level II vocational education or above, as 'equivalent' to Year 12 when analysing educational attainment levels and thus is included in the data in this article. The level will change to Certificate Level III in 2020.

COAG define 'Year 12 or equivalent or AQF Certificate II' as:

- having been awarded a statement or certificate of completion of Year 12 by an Australian Government studies authority/Department; or
- having attained a Qualification at AQF Certificate Level II or above. Endnote 2 and Endnote 3

COAG refer to this in their reports as 'Year 12 attainment'.

Education data are coded using the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED) 2001 (cat. no. 1272.0). All data used in this article are sourced from the 2011 Census of Population and Housing and are self reported by respondents.

Not Stated

Where classifications used included a 'not stated' category, data in this category have been excluded prior to the calculation of percentages - in effect, this has 'distributed' those results across the remaining categories.

Overseas Visitors

Overseas visitors are excluded from all calculations.

University includes University or other Tertiary Institution.

TAFE includes Technical or Further Educational Institution (including TAFE colleges).

Why 20–24 years?

Utilising the age range 20–24 years provides a picture of young people's educational achievement or continuing interest in education at the end of compulsory schooling and at the beginning of their working careers. The age range is also utilised in a number of Australian Bureau of Statistics articles (Australian Social Trends (cat. no. 4102.0) and A Picture of the Nation: The Statistician's Report on the 2006 Census (cat. no. 2070.0)) and also as part of the attainment performance indicators in the COAG National Education Agreement.

1971 Census education data

In 1971 attendance at various institutions was reported separately. The 1971 data for university in this article includes those attending University, College of Advanced Education and Teachers College.

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ENDNOTES

1. COAG Reform Council, 2010, 'Education 2010: Comparing performance across Australia', page 38, Viewed 15 August 2012, <<http://www.coagreformcouncil.gov.au/index.cfm>>.

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2. Council of Australian Governments 2009, 'National Education Agreement', COAG, Canberra, page 5, Viewed 15 August 2012, <www.coag.gov.au>.

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3. COAG Reform Council, 2009, 'National Education Agreement: Performance report for 2009', COAG Reform Council, Canberra, page 45, Viewed 22 January 2013, <<http://www.coagreformcouncil.gov.au/index.cfm>>.

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4. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010, 'Are young people learning or earning?' in **Australian Social Trends**, cat. no. 4102.0, 2004, (ABS) Viewed 1 September 2012, <<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features40Mar+2010>>.

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